Middlebury College Disorientation Guide 2014

"The more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it." - Paulo Freire

Introduction

So you're a first-year at Middlebury College. The snazzy orientation festivities have either made you feel like the specialest person alive or like there's been some huge mistake in the admissions process. You're rushing to find some flannels and lululemon so that you *might* start looking like a middkid (check the recycling center!) Or maybe you're like, middkid wuuut? You've just been given a million things to read and you're too busy meeting people to look at any of them. So, put this one somewhere safe and pull it out the first time you get that, "holy cowshit what am i doing here" feeling. Or, if that's now, read on.

If the glossy veneer of this elite college seems to be rubbing off, it might be helpful to know that there are Others trying to put on a new varnish, with drastically different colors.

This guide is a working-document written by a fluid collective of students committed to organizing, educating, learning, and building a transformative community. As students from diverse backgrounds and experiences, we critically examine Middlebury College as an institution and seek to honor it as a community of students, faculty, and staff with a long history of resistance to injustice. We've been part of many efforts to change this private college, which does not fit into our ideal of free education available to all. Some of our efforts have been through institutional channels, and others have not. We feel that no matter what methods people choose, it is important to know what has been done before and what is possible when we are organized. We think we can transform this place, or at least throw a wrench in the charge towards corporatization and whitefantasy-heterosexist-bleakification. This guide is a small effort to ask you to join us, or join with someone else, get creative, don't wear salmon colored shorts, and if you feel like you have to sell your soul, don't sell it to the wrong people.
If you want to get in touch, contact disorientmidd@gmail.com.

we'll get to the prettier parts, but first we have to start with ***MYTH BUSTING:***

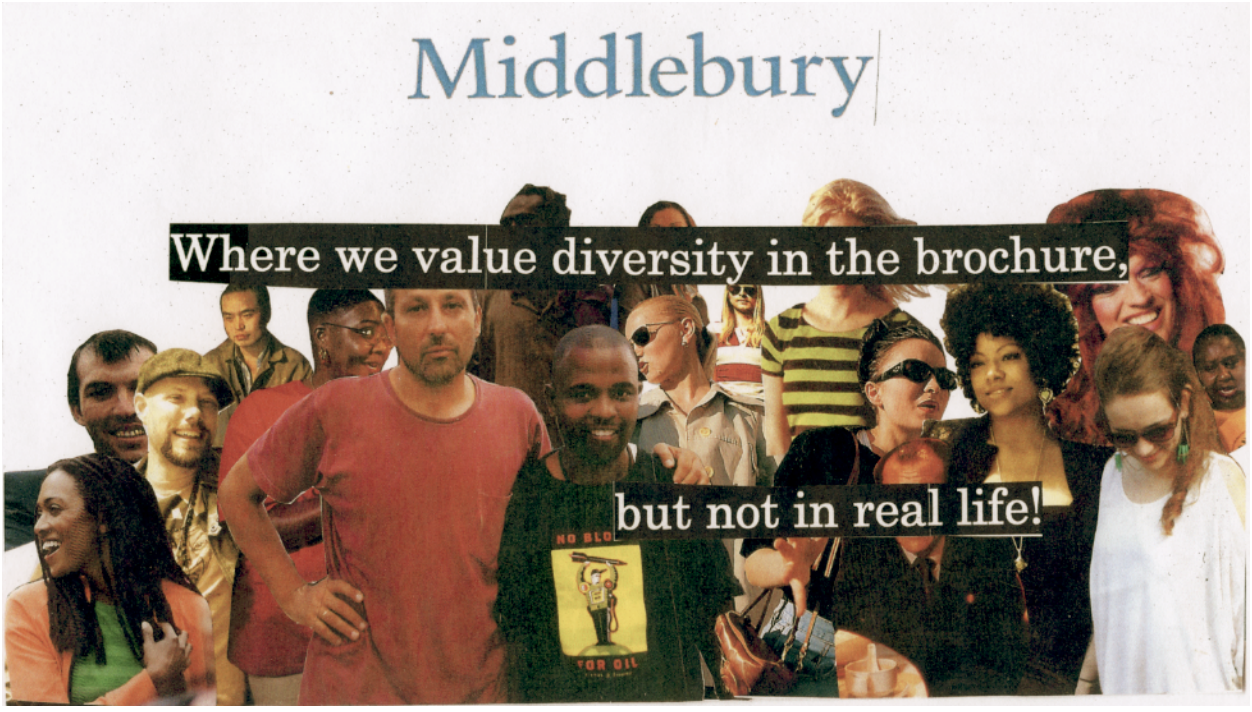
Myth #1: Middlebury has a genuinely environmentalist agenda.
This might be true if you add the footnote: *when it boosts our image and raises profits. Many of the environmental innovations at Middlebury are truly useful in addressing environmental problems. However, in efforts to accomplish these marketable projects, Middlebury has often participated in larger processes that contribute to the grand mistreatment of the earth and most of its people. For example, as part of the plan to be carbon neutral by 2016, Middlebury is planning to buy methane gas from a farm and transport it through a new proposed pipeline. To save money on the carbon neutrality project (highly attractive to donors), Middlebury is supporting the construction of a pipeline that will transport fracked gas from Alberta, Canada through Vermont and under Lake Champlain. In case you haven't heard, fracking = water on fire, toxic chemicals in the ground, and a lot more cancer. Did we mention Vermont residents (including students, faculty, and staff) are overwhelmingly opposed and have been actively

campaigning against it? How good is carbon neutrality when it requires Middlebury to throw support behind an undemocratically built pipeline that will continue our dependency on fossil fuels for the next half-century? To learn more, visit this article by Middlebury students: http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/its-not-easy-being-green-for-middlebury-college/

While initiatives that help grow the College's endowment are heralded by the administration, student activism that points to the root causes of environmental destruction and hypocrisies like the one just mentioned, are disciplined or ignored. For instance, when students pointed out that investing our billion-dollar endowment in industries that wreak havoc on planet is a bit of a contradiction, the administration showed that the growth of the endowment is more important than our environmental impact. Disciplinary action was taken against some of these students who called themselves the Dalai Lama Welcoming Committee for sending out a fake press release and follow up explanation reminding the campus that,"our complicity has on-the-ground implications: US-made weapons fueling the drug wars in Mexico, drone attacks killing civilians in Pakistan, and the Keystone XL pipeline threatening communities from Canada to the Gulf." Demands for divestment from fossil fuels and war manufacturing grew along with similar divestment efforts around the country, but were rejected by the administration last year. To learn more, visit: http://divestforourfuture.tumblr.com/ and http://middleburydlwc.wordpress.com/ Activists have shown that innovation alone will not address climate change, first we have to stop corporate involvement in politics and the consolidation of waste and harmful extraction practices on the lands of indigenous people, poor people, and people of color. Despite our clearly voiced

commitment to protecting the planet, the administration doesn't want to face up to this reality.

Myth #2: Middlebury is "progressive"
Middlebury presents itself as a school with liberal values. However, the academy is an inherently conservative institution. Diversity, political progressivism, and multiculturalism all serve the corporate, profit-driven interests of the college. In reality, there are very few faculty of color (even fewer tenured faculty of color), no multicultural center or paid staff person to address the needs of students and faculty of color, and less than half the student body is on any financial aid. Yes, many Middlebury students are very good at being politically correct. But when not offending people becomes more important than challenging the status quo or the structure of the institution at large, we need to reassess. This is not truly progressive--as in, leading to real change or progress--rather, it conserves the current expectations about who gets to be offended, and how they get to express it. Tolerance of those who deviate from norms is not enough--nor is a society that offers assimilation as the only means of equality.



Myth #3: Middlebury students are exceptional
You've probably already met some pretty cool people. We think our friends are exceptional, too. But we have some doubts about the line we are constantly fed that all Middlebury students are individually outstanding- the "best of the best." Meritocracy is not real. We got here because we're smart and we worked hard, but we also got here because were given access to certain forms of education, and because our learning styles were validated by a particular set of standards that get people into college-- like work that mainly tests how well you can take a test. Lots and lots of people are smart, talented, and hardworking who don't end up at schools like Middlebury- in fact, these schools function on their very elitism, and excluding 85% of applicants

is what makes this happen. What's more, the college functions on educating us with a certain type of knowledge. In this process, other forms of knowledge are easily invalidated- like those that come from lived experience! The thing is, it's easy to start thinking after your first year here that no one else outside of Middlebury will "get it." They didn't take that sociology class that taught you that everything is constructed (even gender?!!), but actually, plenty of non-middleburians, non-elite collegians for that matter, have knowledge that you need. And chances are, the exchange won't happen if you start off a sentence with, "well according to Foucault…"

Well, shit. So everything sucks? NOT QUITE! This guide will give you some inspiration from the past, and some good things to get involved in now.

A People's History of Middlebury College

Last J-Term, students taught a class called A People's History of Middlebury College in an effort to construct a history of this school centered on marginalized voices, social/political mobilizations, and periods of struggle. Here's a brief summary of their research.

1. **Emma Willard is "unbecoming"**

In 1812, Emma Willard opened a Female Seminary in her home, writing around that time, "My neighborhood to Middlebury College made me bitterly feel the disparity in educational facilities between the two sexes; and hoped that, if the matter was once set before the men as legislators, they would be ready to correct the error" (quoted in Stameshkin Vol. 1; 117). When she asked President of the College Henry Davis if she might learn the school's methods by observing classes and if her students might be able to audit classes he told her that such a request was "unbecoming." Undeterred by such condescension and growing increasingly aware of sexism within education in the US, Willard left Middlebury and went on to establish a school in New York and write her famous 'Plan for Improving Female Education.'

2. **Alexander Twilight is black?!**

In 1823, Alexander Twilight, the namesake of Twilight Hall, graduated from Middlebury. Though he is often touted by the Middlebury administration as the first Black student in US history to receive a college degree, was likely admitted to Middlebury College because he "passed" as white. Given the fuss that occurred in the 1840s over the school's admittance of Black student (and its subsequent rejection of a group of Black students from Philadelphia due to its one-Black-student-at-a-time quota), it is likely that the school accidentally graduated a Black scholar and has since revised history. Twilight went on to be the first African American elected to a state legislature.

3. **Secret Frats**
In 1844, when the first fraternity chapter was formed at Middlebury — the Alpha Mu chapter of Chi Psi — the college administration officially banned such organizations. But Chi Psi was allowed to continue to meet underground because "its early members included men who were known for their academic excellence and outstanding Christian character." So a group of students organized a student meeting to condemn the existence of secret fraternities at Middlebury.

4. **The only black student in 20 years**
In 1845, Martin Freeman, the only black student at Middlebury between 1840 and 1880, enrolled at Middlebury. Given the fact that Alexander Twilight ('23) apparently "passed" as white during his time at Middlebury, Freeman was considered to be the first black student to attend Middlebury College. He was selected to give a salutatorian speech at his commencement and went on to be the first Black president of an American college before moving to Liberia and continuing his work in higher education.

5. **The entire student body goes on strike**
In 1879, after years of discontent with the demerit system introduced in 1878, students rallied to protest the suspension of the popular sophomore Clarence G. Leavenworth '82 whose rowdy antics had left him with over 50 demerits.

6. **Chellis is 1st woman to graduate and 1st in her class**
In 1886, May Belle Chellis (namesake of Chellis House), graduated as the first woman to receive a Middlebury College degree. She was the winner of a Waldo Prize for academic excellence and graduated first in her class. Despite the sexism prevalent both on and off campus at the time, when the women students pushed to be able to speak publicly with the male students, the male editors of the campus newspaper (then called The Undergraduate) publicly offered their support.

7. **Students burn down benches in Old Chapel**
In an act that came "not from motives of devilry and distinction, but for improvement," students broke into Old Chapel, ripped out the old wooden benches, and burned them (quoted in Stameshkin Vol. 1; 208). When the administration found out they punished the students and, in a rare moment of administrative transparency, admitted that the students "were warranted in making these thorough repairs."

8. **KDR is founded as a critique of fraternity system**
In 1905, ten "neutrals" (students who were not part of the dominating fraternity system) formed the Kappa Delta Rho (KDR) fraternity in the hopes that it "would not condone the pranks, drunkenness, and elitism allowed by the other fraternities" (Vol. 1; 263).

9. **Female Students Vote Sororities Out**
Of the 194 female students at Middlebury in 1934, 158 petition the President to abolish sororities. Sororities were forced onto the women as a justification for the existence of fraternities; in order

to prove that there was 'equality' amongst the sexes, women were forced to continue their own Greek life against their desires up to this point of resistance.

10. **Intentional recruitment of wealthy students begins**
In a move that David Stameshkin considers to be the start of the making of Middlebury as the 'elite' institution that it is today, Middlebury administrator and recruitment officer Stanley Wright begins to recruit under-performing, wealthy students from preparatory schools who before would not have been admitted to the school (1947).

11. **Staff lead a successful union campaign**
In 1947, 68 college employees (in buildings, grounds, and maintenance) who formed a local with the United Mine Workers union walked off their jobs to protest poor working conditions and pay.

12. **Student College Radio in Founded**
In 1949, WRMC starts operating out of a converted chicken coop

13. **An 'abortion underground' is founded**
In 1967, Torie Osborn (founder of the future Middlebury College Women's Union-- the first feminist group at Middlebury) begin an "abortion underground," driving students seeking abortions across the border into Canada for affordable and safe care.

14. **SGA votes to dissolve itself**
In 1967, the student government dissolves itself to bring attention to the fact that it was rendered powerless by the administration.

15. **Students occupy the ROTC building**
In 1972, Students involved with the Radical Education Action Project occupy part of Adirondack House where the ROTC offices were and turned it into a "Peace Center' after the Nixon Administration bombed North Vietnam.

16. **The Gay People at Middlebury**
In 1975, the first LGBTQ student organization forms, calling itself The Gay People at Middlebury.

17. **Middlebury Divests from South African Apartheid**
From 1981-1986, students and faculty protest South African Apartheid by building a symbolic rock wall on campus, staging a sit-in in the presidents office, and joining forces with the national campaign. Middlebury’s board of Trustees finally divests, as many other universities had done before them.

18. **Students protest the rise in tuition**
In 1990, Students form STARTUP (Students Against the Rise in Tuition and Unjust Policies) and half the student body boycott classes and stage a sit-in on the Old Chapel steps to protest the immense rise in tuition from the year before.

19. **Students launch divestment campaign against fossil fuels and arms manufacturers.**
A student group that called themselves the Dalai Lama Welcoming Committee (DLWC) released a satirical email announcing that the college had divested from fossil fuels and war manufacturers in honor of the Dalai Lama coming to speak on campus. In the wake of this statement being revealed as untrue, students organized a campaign with members of the Socially Responsible Investing Club that became "Divest Midd." The work of these students led to Ron Liebowitz revealing how much of our endowment is invested in these industries, got the Board of Trustees and the Finance Committee to reevaluate their relationship with Investure, but eventually the college decided not to divest. The struggle for divestment continues today, as momentum has picked up nation wide!

20. **Students for Justice for Palestine stirs up campus**
In 2012, a club that includes Palestinians, Israelis, and students of other nationalities formed to call attention to the injustices suffered by Palestinians under apartheid-like conditions. Along with similar organizations at universities across the country, SJP launched an educational campaign to expose how the U.S. is implicated in the displacement and widespread oppression of Palestinians. One example of their activism is a street theatre piece in which students built a symbolic checkpoint outside a dining hall.

21. **A student collective launches the *Beyond the Green* Publication**
In 2014, after years of feeling marginalized by mainstream platforms for news and dialogue, a collective formed to give voice to those pursuing cultural and structural change within this institution. Beyond the Green is "a student-run publication that seeks to provide space for voices that are not being heard on our campus. we are grounded by politics that are radical, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist, anti-homophobic and anti-ableist (against all forms of oppression) and that reject the structural neo-liberal paradigm that characterizes middlebury college and its official publications." In one semester, they have already become a hugely important resource on campus. Check out the publication at go/btg.

For a more complete people's history, check out:
http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/a-people-s-history-of-middlebury-college

So there's a lot in Midd's past to be inspired by. But what's going on now?

Some Current Campaigns

Right now, there are three ongoing efforts challenging Middlebury to take its commitment to diversity seriously. After students fought long and hard to establish an Africana or African American Studies major (currently, we have a minor that is only possible to complete if you begin taking classes Freshman year), they faced too many institutional roadblocks, and decided

to change priorities. Recently, energy has been focused more on getting a multicultural center and changing the eurocentric curriculum.

1. Students are demanding that the administration provide funding and other necessary support for a **Multicultural Center.** MANY students over the years have envisioned a student space in which people of all identities feel comfortable. This is a space that visually represents the students it seeks to serve, that is equipped with qualified staff to serve students seeking multicultural resources and services otherwise unavailable on campus, and that educates the entire campus community on issues of identity and privilege.The administration has heard this demand, now its time for them to do something about it.

2. **"Midd Included"** is demanding a change to the college's Culture and Civilizations requirements to reflect a more inclusive and less eurocentric curriculum. In the current requirements, the college emphasizes the study of Western culture, while minimizing the importance of the rest of the world's cultures by lumping them together into one category (AAL - Africa, Asia, Latin America). The proposal to make the EUR credit an option rather than a requirement doesn't mean students will never be exposed to European thought; the majority of classes here (even those are not region focused) are taught through Western perspectives and epistemologies. It does mean greater academic freedom for students who wish to study other regions of the world, while students who wish to pursue the study of Europe can still do so.

3. Founded by a group of students in the Axinn basement during the 2011-2012 school year, "**JusTalks**" hopes to create a program for first-years (including sophomore Febs!) to reflect and discuss issues of identity, power, and privilege. These students hope to fill a void in the Middlebury experience (discussions around oppression are hard to find in the curriculum). Starting with an event in J-Term, the program has been very well-received by the student body and has been able to bringing luminaries like Dr. Angela Davis to campus. Now entering its third year, JusTalks hopes to expand upon its efforts and create year-round programming for all students.

Additionally, two student videos were recently made to document student experiences of race and class at Middlebury. *Abroad at Home: Accounts of the invisible* by Tim Garcia can be found at https://vimeo.com/95435773. *Inside Class* by Molly Stuart can be found at https://vimeo.com/66258547. They should both be required viewing for faculty and incoming students.

4. Student activism also extends beyond campus. For example, **Juntos** is a student group working in alliance with migrant farmworkers in Vermont. Together, migrants and students are defending human rights, combating a racist immigration system, strengthening communities, and creating a more just dairy industry. We work with Migrant Justice, a Burlington-based grassroots organziation, to expand farmworkers' access to transportation, health services, and language acquisition, while building an intersectional movement for collective liberation. Email juntos@middlebury.edu to get involved.

Activist Groups in Vermont

If campus organizing is not your thing, or even if it is, there are some important issues off campus that can ground us in non-Middlebury reality and give us an outlet to apply what we're learning ('cause that's the point right?!). Here's a list of four great community organizations working to make sure people still have reason to be proud Vermonters.

1. **Migrant Justice/Justicia Migrante** works to build the voice and power of the migrant community in VT in order to create social and economic justice and defend human rights. About 1500 migrant workers currently live in this state and sustain its dairy farms, turning profits for Ben & Jerry's, Cabot Creamery, and other well-known Vermont brands. Dairy migrant farmworkers do not have access to work visas, and are therefore undocumented. For the last five years, Migrant Justice has supported workers in telling the public their experiences of extreme isolation and exploitation (80 work-weeks, cramped and unsanitary housing, racist policing, stolen wages, etc.). As the organization has grown, migrants and allies have won some incredible victories, such as access to drivers licenses, deportations halted, bias-free policing, and returned wages. The student organization Juntos works closely with Migrant Justice, and seeks to build a student-migrant community and work together for systemic change. Contact juntos@middlebury.edu to get involved. And check out the Migrant Justice website at http://www.migrantjustice.net/.

2. Only the coolest kids on campus volunteer at **the Vermont Workers' Center**, a democratic, member-run organization dedicated to organizing for the rights of the people in Vermont. They want all the good things: dignified work, housing, education, childcare, transportation, universal healthcare, and um, social justice! They've already organized an impressive base of committed Vermonters who are holding the powers that be accountable for their actions and building a diverse, democratic movement. http://www.workerscenter.org/

3. **Rising Tide Vermont** is a group that organizes and takes direct action to stop climate change and demand accountability from those most responsible for it. They're the ones leading the campaign against the fracked gas pipeline that's proposed to come through Middlebury. They also work to facilitate a just transition to resilient and equitable land-based communities. If that suits your fancy, get in touch! http://www.risingtidevermont.org/

4. We're super lucky to be close to **Bread and Puppet Theater**, which was founded way back in 1963 with a desire to build community through enjoyment and political engagement. The tools of choice are home grown food and cheap art. On a farm in Glover VT, the company makes art to incite and inspire; "Not the Fine Arts–the Coarse Arts are what we use." There you will also find a 140-year old hay barn was transformed into a museum for veteran puppets. Their traveling puppet shows range from tightly composed theater pieces presented by members of the company, to extensive outdoor pageants which require the participation of many volunteers. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer at Bread and Puppet - one of the oldest, nonprofit, self-supporting theatrical companies in the country. http://breadandpuppet.org/

Advice for Saving $$$

Books! In addition to our fees and tuition, most Middlebury classes require us to spend huge amounts of money on books at the college bookstore. Some books individually cost more than $100. Here are a few ways to spend less:

1. Ask professors to put copies of each book they require on reserve at the library. This means there will be at least one copy there that can only be checked out for use in the

library. You can also make copies or scans of the text from reserve books, and read them at home. You can also ask professors if they have spare copies to lend you for the semester. Some of us have graduated without ever spending a dime on books.

2. Order books on Amazon.com, betterworldbooks.com, or half.ebay.com. Though these sites might not save you a ton of money, prices are definitely cheaper than the bookstore's. Feel free to email professors asking for syllabi/reading lists before the semester starts to get them on time.
3. E-book websites have a surprising amount of useful texts, especially those that are mass-produced or on the older side. Try these for your classes:
   http://ebookcollective.tumblr.com
   http://manybooks.net
   http://libgen.org/
4. In case Middlebury's library doesn't have what you need, use the NExpress network at go/nexpress to check out books from the libraries of other New England liberal arts colleges. They usually take three or four days to reach here, so getting reading lists in advance is helpful.

Laundry! Do it with friends. Share laundry cards and soap, you won't use it all in a semester. Some social houses are privileged with free laundry machines (Xenia, KDR), and you're allowed to use them if you want to - the Student Handbook says so ;).

The Recycling Center! People at Middlebury throw all kinds of things away… find them in the friendly recycling center located across the road from the organic garden.

Transportation:

- **Bikes!** The bike stores in town are pretty expensive, but the student bike shop sells good bikes at the beginning of every semester. You can also use spare pieces in the bike shop to construct your own dream bike for free!
- **Hitchhiking!** This works very well in Vermont, and it's a great way to meet people you wouldn't meet otherwise while covering long distances. If you hitch alone, you must choose the driver as much as they choose you - don't take a ride with someone you doubt, and tell the driver to drop you off immediately if you feel uncomfortable. Couples hitch well, and you can even hitch with a bike or in larger groups.

QUEERS READ THIS: An Army of Lovers Cannot Lose

Middlebury walks a straight line. There aren't a lot of resources for us besides those that students put together for each other. The marginalization of Queers here goes way back, and continues to include hate speech, discipline, and threatening behavior. But we have also built a strong community. Queers and Allies (Q&A), the main LGBT student group on campus that is mostly liberal, is a good place to find community and social events. There is no radical political

queer student group as of yet. Please start one, baby queers! As ACT UP organizers wrote in the Queer Nation Manifesto… Being queer means “leading a different sort of life. It's not about the mainstream, profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy or being assimilated. It's not about executive directors, privilege and elitism. It's about being on the margins, defining ourselves; it's about gender-fuck and secrets, what's beneath the belt and deep inside the heart; it's about the night. Being queer is "grass roots" because we know that everyone of us, every body, every cunt, every heart and ass and dick is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored. Everyone of us is a world of infinite possibility.” If you’re queer, shout it. Be visible. Be proud. Do whatever you need to do to survive in primarily straight spaces like Middlebury. Alternative cultural production is a radical act of resistance--so throw parties. Make art. Make out. Wear glitter. Be outraged. An army of lovers cannot lose!

Mental Health at Middlebury

Middlebury, like many other colleges around the US, has a mental health crisis. Over half of college students nationally rate their mental health as below average or poor, and over a third report prolonged periods of depression. We are overworked, exhausted, in a place that has an 8-month long winter, and for many of us, stifled in our identities and alienated from community. It is important to remember that the college can produce mental health struggles without taking responsibility for it--remember that if you are depressed, anxious, generally out of it, or suffering from any other mental issues, you are not alone. Over half of Middlebury students visit the counseling center at some point. Thankfully, Middlebury does provide free counseling services (to a limited number) at the Parton Health Center. Ask around for recommendations on who might be a good fit- there are just a few full time therapists there. The counseling center psychologists don’t prescribe medication, so if you’re looking for a psychiatrist, call Parton and they’ll refer you to the Addison County Counseling Center. If you need extensions on papers or assigments, your best bet is to ask professors directly, and talk to your dean if they are understanding. One awesome resource for radical mental health analysis is the Icarus Project- go on their website and check out some of their publications if you’re looking for ways to “navigate the space between brilliance and madness!”

Sexual Assault Resources

The first thing to know if you are a survivor of sexual assault is that it is NOT your fault and you are NOT alone.

Students have struggled to get adequate resources for dealing with sexual assault, and thanks to their efforts, you’ve already been given a variety of outlets to help with personal safety and physical and emotional wellbeing. However, if any of these prove unsatisfactory, there are ways to speak up about it and get what you need. MiddSafe is a great student resource.

The continued prevalence of sexual assault at Middlebury is the result of rape culture, which takes many forms. We strongly recommend you learn what it is and how to combat it. This blog, written by a Middlebury student, is a good place to start:

http://www.buzzfeed.com/kristinaswede/18-shockingly-common-things-you-didnt-know-about-mrsx

We also recommend giving some thought to best consent practices. Consent looks different for everyone, but there's plenty of good resources to help you figure out what works for you and your partner(s).

Sex

While sex can be fucked up, it can also be empowering (and fun :O).
Yeah, we've been taught to suspect, fear, abuse, and shame our sexual selves, but once we see that all that is just the patriarchy trying to steal our mojo, we can move on.

Okay, all the expectations and devaluations won't disappear, but we might be able to start having the kind of sex that makes us feel more alive, more capable of transformation. Or in the words of Audre Lorde, "When I speak of the erotic, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our work, our lives."

The Labor of Others: The Labor of Us

As students, we are already workers. Students who have jobs in addition to their studies, are doubly so. We invest vast amounts of time and energy into our schoolwork, while we reproduce and advertise the college's brand, conduct research for faculty, and represent the college to alumni, visitors, and donors. Despite all the time we spend working at jobs and working in school, many of us will still graduate with debt. How is this possible? Because the cost of colleges all over the U.S. has been exploding for the last three decades. Since 1990, Middlebury's tuition has increased by 75%-- from roughly $14,000 to the whopping $58,753 that it costs for academic year 2014-2015. This places Middlebury in the top ten most expensive colleges in the country. This is happening while federal and state governments are gutting their subsidies to universities and their funding for financial aid programs, and as collective student debt surpasses the $1 trillion mark.The college is invested in our not thinking of ourselves as workers, but only as "pure" learners, so that our actual labor is devalued and disappeared. This is exemplified in the encouragement that we take unpaid internships, which function by exploiting the free labor of young people and reproducing class inequities when those who can't afford to work for free don't have access to careers in certain professions. When we graduate, many of us face unemployment, fuel the low-wage labor market, and/or are stuck with exorbitant student loans. So what is there to do? Students all over the world have actively been protesting tuition hikes, striking, taking to the streets, and demanding financial transparency from their administrations. These protests have taken place in Canada, Chile, Mexico, France, (to name a few)--and the U.S. as well, though they have not escalated to the same level here. We need to keep in mind, throughout our time at Middlebury, the following: 1) We are workers, and we do valuable labor for the college through knowledge production. 2) We collectively pay the college millions of dollars for our educations--we are entitled to transparency in what the administration does with that money (hint: it's not going towards pay raises for custodial staff). 3) We have the power to demand no more tuition hikes!!

Money and Power of Administrators and Trustees

Middlebury currently lists 34 trustees on its board. Out of these 34, 20 are white men, 10 are white women, 3 are women of color, and 1 is a man of color. So- thats a board that is 88% white and 62% men. It is safe to say that all of the board members are millionaires, many are billionaires, and they all have backgrounds on wall street or in the corporate world. Maybe that shouldn't surprise us, but it might make us question why people with no background in education are making the most important decisions at this college. In past attempts to convince trustees of different ways of allocating funds, they have only considered the potential increase or decrease in profits. The fact that there are quite a few "successful women" on the board should not be taken as a point of progress--this would subscribe to a neoliberal "lean in" brand of feminism that encourages women to reproduce dominant power structures instead of challenging them.

Here are two trustee profiles to give you a gist:

The Board President: Marna Whittington currently also sits on the directing board of Phillips 66, a Texas based oil manufacturer. This corporation makes petrochemicals, refines crude oil into gasoline, and overall contributes hugely to the fossil fuel industry, environmental injustice, and climate devastation. Whittington has been one of the board members most staunchly opposed to the prospect of Middlebury divesting from fossil fuels.

Garrett Moran is the President at Year Up Inc, which promises to get young people from "poverty to professional careers within a year." The corporation is teamed up with other corporations and banks to make their "philanthrocapitalism" most effective. Moran's background is in private equity and banking, and he also has been a board member of the Posse Foundation.

If you're "bored" of trustees, find some different people to trust.

Got Privilege?

Well, basically, yes. No matter what our backgrounds are, we all have a fair amount of privilege just by attending an elite college like Middlebury. But we're also marginalized in different ways and to different extents. So how do we know what privileges we have and what to do with them? Privilege is all the accommodations society makes for you on account of your identity. The advantages heaped on some because of their skin color, class background, citizenship status, sexuality, gender, size, ability, or whatever else, are tied to long histories of inequality and often become invisible to the people receiving them. It's important to understand how privileges affect how different people tend to experience the world, and how we are constituted by oppressive structures. But privilege is not an explanation for everything, and acknowledging privilege is not the ultimate goal.It has become custom for leftists to "check" their privilege, or their friends privileges, as a way of combating oppression. But ultimately, privilege shouldn't distract us from movement building - something we're all capable of. Guilt is a common, convenient, and useless response to confronting privilege. We've got to get over the guilt and guilting so that we can dismantle the structures that enable our privileges to begin with. Or, more directly, participate in political projects that are trying to do this in fun, straightforward, or ridiculous ways.

A few other things…

1. Privilege is not a sin; if you confess it, it won't disappear.
2. Privilege colors our experiences, but doesn't determine how we act.
3. There's no formula to calculate how privileged or oppressed you are. Better not to imagine there is.
4. We all need to listen more. When privilege is preventing you from listening, stop, take a seat, and try harder.

Andrea Smith's writing on privilege:
http://andrea366.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/the-problem-with-privilege-by-andrea-smith/

Oh, we forgot to mention privilege on a global scale. What does it mean to study abroad as students from a "first-world" country in an age of global capitalism and imperialism?
Well, we think it's complicated. Colonialism today mostly looks different than it did 100 years ago. The British East India Company didn't have a commitment to "business ethics" or "sustainability," and we hadn't discovered "economic development projects" as a way to ameliorate inequality. Development agencies, often acting as the handmaiden of corporations, create value structures in which lives are measured purely based on potential for economic return. If a working girl is a good investment, the first world will offer her an education. If her pregnant mother is a burden, better take her land for the use of a multinational corporation. Most development projects rely on racialized depictions of third world people who are either "deserving" of help or "lazy" lost-causes; they usually result in the intensification of labor (especially women's labor). Not only does the Development agenda fail to address the root causes of inequality, it also can serve as a justification for militarism. Feminist scholars Lila

Abu-Lughod, Chandra Mohanty, and Kalpana Wilson illustrate this point extensively. What's clear is that colonialism has been ethicized. We can "go green" and buy organic, cruelty-free, and fair trade, but the cost of "first-world" lifestyles still weighs heavy on the rest of the world. Looking past the public relations jargon and marketing schemes, we find that our privilege is not easily remedied. It is not a historical coincidence that the countries that were official colonies a hundred years ago are now exploited by multinationals based in the US or Europe, and are regularly policed by the US or NATO. One can explain this by citing "power vacuums", corporate ingenuity, or even "uncivilized natives," but the theories are hollow and the relationships of domination are still tangible. The question of how to navigate all this becomes even harder when we're in another country.

Something about exerting influence as "Global Citizens"

For those of us that are U.S. citizens, we have the privilege to travel almost anywhere. But will we do it as ignorant vacationers? over-curious scholars? rebels hoping to "go native"? or something different? The way we live in a foreign country is very precarious. Particularly those with white privilege risk following the well-worn paths of appropriating, exoticizing, or acting without cultural sensitivity.

<< NO.

Alternatives to Studying Abroad

Domestic programs

- Union Semester: US labor history and organizing in New York City
- Spelman College: Middlebury has an exchange program (meaning financial aid transfers) with Spelman, a HBCU (Historically Black College/University) for women in Atlanta, GA.
- Washington Semester at American University, Transforming Communities: Potential

option that deals with community organizing and how policies affect communities. Apparently is a good fit for those interested in community organizing in DC

- Hecua: Education for Social Justice in the Twin Cities
  Public School: Some of us have also studied at public colleges such as City University of New York, and transferred credits back to Middlebury. This is not an exchange, but a "domestic study abroad" as Middlebury calls it.

International programs

The following are some suggestions for "alternative" study abroad programs, which more directly address the complicated situation we confront when we want to travel out of the U.S.:

- **Mexico Solidarity Network:** A nonprofit organization that works directly with community organizations and unions in Mexico, including the Zapatistas. Students travel to and live in communities in Chiapas, Mexico City, Tlaxcala, and Ciudad Juarez.
- **Hecua:** Education for Social Justice in Norway, New Zealand, Ecuador, and Ireland

Rad Classes (non-comprehensive):

Sociology of Punishment - Rebecca Tiger
Social Movements & Collective Actions - Linus Owens
Models of Inclusive Education - Tara Affolter
Feminist Theory - Sujata Moorti
Foundations in Women's and Gender Studies - Sujata Moorti
Unruly Bodies: Black Womanhood in Popular Culture - J. Finley
Feminist Blogging - Laurie Essig
Sociology of Drugs - Rebecca Tiger
Gender and Sexuality in Media - Louisa Stein
Social Change: Theory and Practice - Jamie McCallum
Outlaw Women - Catherine Wright
Global Climate Change - staff
White People - Laurie Essig
Sociology of Education - Peggy Nelson
The Southwest Borderlands: Cultural Encounters in a Changing Environment - Mary Mendoza
The Civil Rights Revolution - J Ralph
Education in the USA - Tara Affolter
Sociology of Heterosexuality - Laurie Essig
Poverty, Inequality and Distributive Justice - P. Mathews
The Sophomore Seminar (What is the Good Life and How Do We Live it?) -Jonathan Miller-Lane

Also, be sure to take independent studies! Pitch an idea to a faculty member for something you want to learn, and spend the following semester doing that!

Reading List

(categories are loose)

Blogs

protest-highered.tumblr.com
blackgirldangerous.org
http://youngist.org
http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/

Gender & Feminism

Feminism is for Everybody, bell hooks
Under Western Eyes and Feminism Without Borders, Chandra Mohanty
Redefining Realness, Janet Mock
Normal Life, Dean Spade
Do Muslim Women Need Saving?, Lila Abu-Lughod
Women, Race, and Class, Angela Davis
Precarious Life, Judith Butler
The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto, Sandy Stone
My New Gender Workbook, Kate Bornstein

Race and Racism

The Angela Y. Davis Reader, edited by Joy James
This Bridge Called My Back, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa
White Like Me, Tim Wise
Assata, Assata Shakur
Sister Outsider, Audre Lorde
The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander
Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America, Melissa Harris-Perry

State and Economy

Hegemony or Survival, Noam Chomsky
Are Prisons Obsolete? Angela Davis
Days of War and Nights of Love, Crimethinc.
Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology, David Graeber
T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Hakim Bey
Class Matters, bell hooks
Debt: The First 500 Years, David Graeber

Decolonization and Indigeneity

Conquest, Andrea Smith
I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala, Rigoberta Menchu

Sexuality
The Ethical Slut, Dossie Easton and Janet W. Hardy
Yes Means Yes, Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti
From Gender to Sexuality, Gayle S. Rubin
Playing the Whore, Melissa Gira Grant
Sex Without Guilt, Albert Ellis

Transformative Education
Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Friere
Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Marshall Rosenberg
The Shame of the Nation, Jonathan Kozol
Every Day Anti Racism, Mica Pollock
Other People's Children, Lisa Delpit

Fiction
The Dispossessed, Ursula Leguin
The Monkey Wrench Gang, Edward Abbey
Stone Butch Blue, Leslie Feinberg

Practice
Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook, 2005, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective
Earth First! Direct Action Manual, 2014, Earth First!
Steal this Book, 1971, Abbey Hoffman

Film List

Breaking the Spell, 1999
Black Power Mixtape, 2011
Boys Don't Cry, 1999
Capitalism: A love story, 2009
Cowspiracy, 2014
End:Civ, 2011
El Violín, 2005
Food Inc., 2008
Edible City: Grow the Revolution, 2012
Harlan County USA, 1977
How to Survive a Plague, 2012
Inside Job, 2010
La Jaula de Oro, 2013
Milk, 2008
The Great Dictator, 1940
Paris is Burning, 1990
PickAxe, 1999

Slingshot Hip Hop, 2008
The Take, 2004
Thelma and Louise, 1991
The Weather Underground, 2002
The Yes Men Fix the World, 2009